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GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN NEWSLETTER PREPARED FOR Morristown National Historical Park

Draft Alternatives

Developing a General Management Plan for a National Park is a sequential process that moves through a series of distinct stages. Early in the process we reviewed the history and mission of Morristown National Historical Park and studied existing plans in an effort to identify the main issues and opportunities confronting the park.

Faithful readers of our first GMP Newsletter will recall the promise that the next issue would present summaries of the draft alternatives. This is the point we are at now, and it is one of the most critical stages of the planning process.

Here for the first time we begin to look ahead and consider alternative futures for the “Military Capital of the American Revolution.”

After intensive consultation with park staff, NPS professionals, park partners such as the Washington Association of New Jersey, planners in the Morristown area, and the public, we have developed a new mission statement and formulated three alternatives to guide future management of the park. The mission statement updates and presents more clearly the park’s purpose and significance. The alternatives begin with the required “no-action”, or continuation of current practice. The others present different visions of how the park should develop over the next 20 years. These are broad philosophies to guide park managers in setting priorities and allocating scarce human and financial resources. The alternatives do not propose specific actions, but examples of actions that might flow from them are presented on the map in the center of this newsletter. These examples will be developed more fully in the draft plan later this year.

Each of the alternatives is meant to be a self-contained, feasible proposal. It is not the intent of the planning process to set up impractical alternatives as “straw men” only to discard them. The final plan will include a section of “Alternatives Considered but Rejected” to record suggestions that were found infeasible.

In describing alternatives it is the differences that are often emphasized. The attentive reader will note that the “common” features of these alternatives are probably larger than the differences. This is not entirely surprising: at a park like Morristown, managers will always focus on preserving the historical resources they are entrusted with. The fundamental NPS goals of protecting park resources and providing for public enjoyment and understanding act to inhibit radical changes of direction. This allows for overall continuity while adjusting for changing conditions and learning from operational experience.

Next Steps

Once these alternatives have been refined and their impacts assessed, a Preferred Alternative is selected by the Regional Director of the NPS Northeast Region, in consultation with the Park Superintendent and others. While each alternative can stand alone, the process permits the combining of elements to form a new Preferred Alternative.

Before that time arrives, there is another important opportunity for public input, and that time is right now. Public participation has been valuable so far, and it remains vital in putting these alternatives into final form. The importance of this input cannot be exaggerated. It is absolutely

certain that no plan can succeed if it is not understood and supported by people who care about the park. Also, it is much more effective to express an opinion now, when the alternatives are still being formulated, than to wait until they have been incorporated into a formal draft.

We invite you to send us your comments and suggestions on the enclosed postage-paid card. You can also contact us by e-mail and telephone as indicated below. The park’s website www.nps.gov/morr will soon have links to planning documents, newsletters, and GMP team e-mail.



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“We were absolutely, literally starved. I do solemnly swear that I did not put a single morsel of victuals into my mouth for four days and as many nights, except a little black birch bark which I gnawed off a stick of wood, if that can be called victuals. I saw several of the men roast their old shoes and eat them.”

Private Joseph Plumb Martin, Connecticut Brigade



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In thinking about the alternatives presented here, try to consider not only whether they are reasonable in themselves, but also whether they provide a means to address the major issues facing the park. Is there an approach that might work better? Are there concerns that are not being considered adequately? Remember, Morristown National Historical Park will still be here in 20 years. Whether it continues to meet the needs of the public, and whether it is able to satisfy the demands placed on it while preserving its outstanding historical resources depends in large measure on the effectiveness of this plan. Your help is important in shaping a successful plan that will carry this park into and through ever more challenging times.

Thank you for your time and continued interest,

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Draft Mission Statement

Purpose:

Morristown National Historical Park preserves, protects and maintains the landscapes, structures, archeological resources and collections of the Continental Army winter encampments, the headquarters of General George Washington, and related Revolutionary War sites at Morristown for the benefit and inspiration of the public. The park interprets the history and subsequent commemoration of these encampments and the extraordinary fortitude of the officers and enlisted men under Washingtonis leadership.

Significance:

Attracted by Morristownis strategic location, including defensible terrain, important communication routes, access to critical resources, and a supportive community, General Washington chose it as the site for the main Continental Army encampment during two winters of the War for Independence. The park encompasses most of the ground occupied by the army during the vast 1779-80 encampment, as well as smaller encampments in subsequent years, and the site of the fortification from the 1777 encampment.

The winter of 1779-80, the most severe of the century, brought great suffering to the Continental Army at Morristown. Despite this and many other adversities, General Washington demonstrated his leadership by holding the army together as an effective fighting force. The Ford Mansion, where Washington made his headquarters, is an important feature of the park and recalls civilian contributions to the winning of independence.

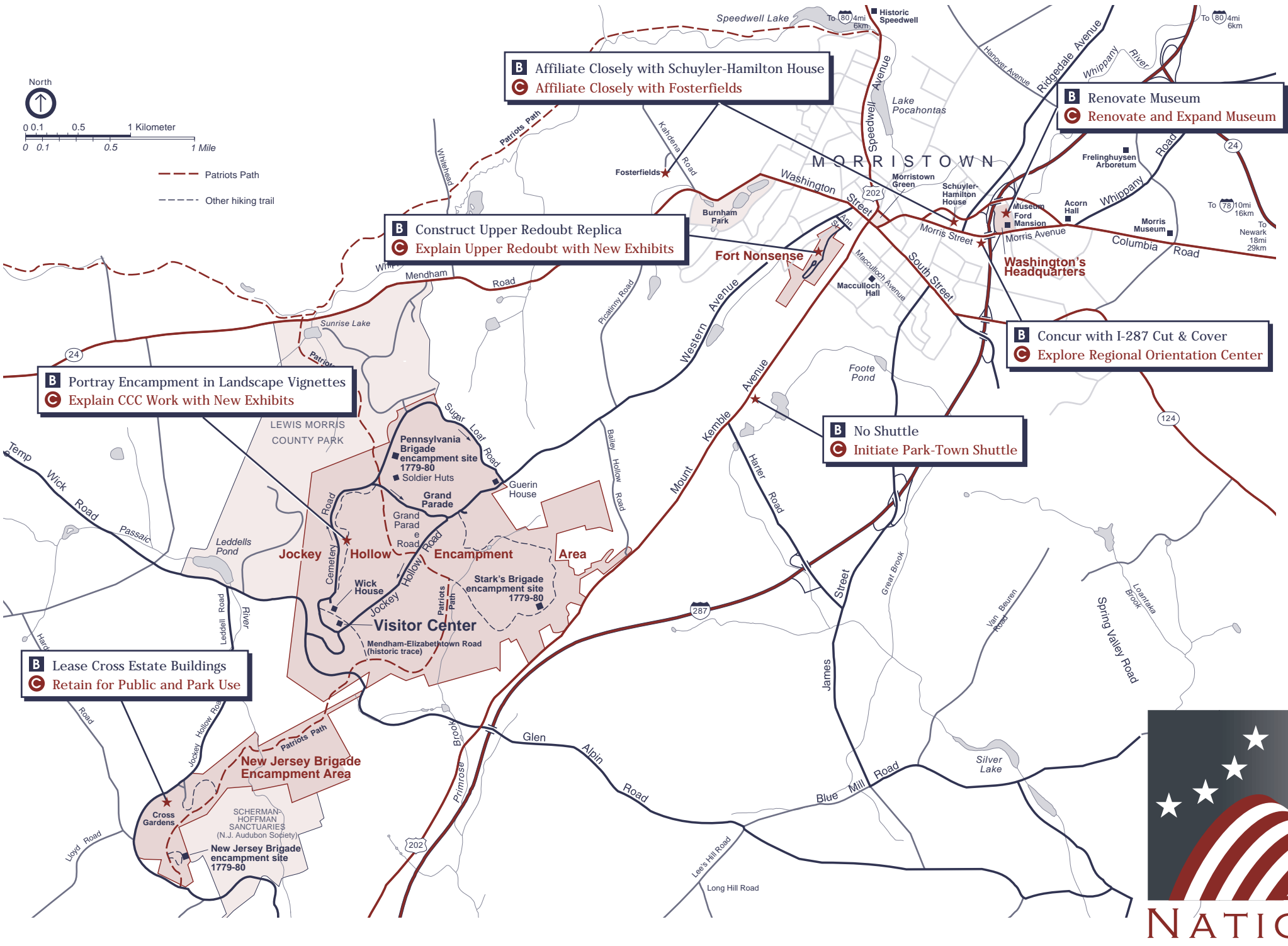
Morristownis resources of the War for Independence were first preserved by the Washington Association of New Jersey, an important early success of the nationis historic preservation movement. Later public and private efforts, sustained by federal action following the designation of Morristown as the first National Historical Park, protected the outstanding resources the park now manages.

Draft Alternative Concepts

The descriptions that follow outline the differences among the alternatives and try to give a feeling for how the visitor experience at the park would differ if they were adopted. Major aspects of park management would remain the same under each of the alternatives, either because certain actions are required by law, or because there seems to be only one “right thing” to do. While there is a natural tendency to focus on the differences, we should keep in mind that much will remain the same and the park will undoubtedly still be recognizable if you visited it in 15 or 20 years.

Under any of the alternatives the NPS is required to protect the resources in its care under all applicable laws and regulations. To the extent possible, park management will try to identify and prevent undesirable intrusions on lands surrounding the park. A later stage of the planning process will develop cost estimates for actions that would result from adopting a particular plan. In choosing an alternative the NPS makes a commitment to carrying out its provisions to the best of its ability. Each alternative assumes that adequate staffing and budget will be provided to park managers, and no distinction should be made among alternatives in this regard.

Interpretation at Morristown NHP will always emphasize the War for Independence because that is the park’s reason for being, as expressed in its legislative history and in the Mission Statement that derives from it. Partnerships are valued under all of the alternatives. The distinctions between one alternative and another lie largely in how best to achieve similar goals. The map highlights several actions that are appropriate under the two action alternatives. However, these should be seen as possible examples, not as approved projects.



ALTERNATIVE A: No Action

Sometimes misleadingly called the “No Action” alternative, this approach represents a continuation of current practices. If neither of the two “action” alternatives are adopted, current plans would remain in force. Park Goals, as outlined in the 1996 Management Objectives Workshop and stated in the 2000-2005 Strategic Plan, would continue to provide guidance. All projects approved under these plans could be carried out; however, it might be difficult to respond to conditions that have changed since the adoption of the Bicentennial-era Master Plan.

Under this alternative there would be little active management in the forested areas. Monitoring would be continued, as well as limited removal of exotic species, but further action to ensure forest sustainability might be problematic, since that was not recognized as a concern when existing plans were formed.

The park would continue to focus on protecting its primary resources relating to the War for Independence: the archeological resources, landscapes, structures, and collections. Facilities would continue to be provided for the display, storage and research access to the park’s collections.

Interpretation would continue to seek to integrate the different park units and to place Morristown within its larger contexts. The park would seek to maintain and expand partnerships with other historical organizations, in particular the Washington Association. Shuttle service in Jockey Hollow, already authorized, might be provided to improve the visitor's experience and offer an alternative to dependence on private automobiles.

ALTERNATIVE B: Concentrate on the Encampment

This alternative would seek to suggest, to the fullest extent possible, the character of the park during the encampment period of 1777-1782. It recognizes that a completely faithful restoration of those conditions is unattainable, in part because our knowledge of the period will always remain incomplete. The park would employ interpretive programs, exhibits and selective restoration, rehabilitation or reconstruction of features to present to visitors

a scene evocative of the period of significance. This alternative thus attempts to create a meaningful visitor experience through more direct contact with the physical landscape.

This approach might be especially evident in the areas of the encampments. Forests, particularly in a zone focused around some encampment roads and trails, would be managed actively to suggest the physical landscape conditions encountered during the encampments. The remainder of the forest would be managed to ensure sustainability and diversity, using expanded monitoring to provide information on potentially adverse changes.

Paradoxically, although this alternative seeks to evoke a less complex time, it could entail the most extensive alteration of existing conditions. Features from later periods could be selectively removed or de-emphasized to provide visitors the more direct experience that is being sought.

Emphasis would be placed on the parkis collections, and improved facilities would be provided for their display, storage and research access. In keeping with the overall thrust of this alternative, the emphasis of the collections would be on the War for Independence, as would research and interpretation. Interpretation, however, would be broadly based, placing the Morristown encampments within wider contexts of the War for Independence.

Partnerships, especially with the Washington Association, would remain vital in attaining park goals. Relationships with other historical sites that emphasize the War for Independence, expressed, for example, through the Crossroads of the Revolution initiative, would be stressed under this approach. A park-town shuttle service might be provided, possibly with the assistance of partners, to integrate the town and the different park units and to offer an alternative to dependence on private automobiles

ALTERNATIVE C: Embrace Later Commemorative Period

Alternative C also emphasizes the encampment period; but in addition it recognizes the efforts of successive generations to protect and memorialize resources of that period. Particularly with respect to the forested landscape, visitors would experience the encampment period somewhat less by direct contact, with greater reliance placed on interpretive methods such as exhibits and other media. Forests would be managed uniformly to ensure sustainability and diversity, using expanded monitoring to provide information on potentially adverse changes. This alternative would preserve selected post-18th Century additions to the historic scene and may draw on them to illustrate the continuum of land use within the park.

Emphasis would be placed on the parkis collections, and improved facilities would be provided for their display, storage and research access. The scope of collections and research efforts, while directed toward increasing knowledge of park resources from the encampment period, would embrace later efforts to protect and memorialize these resources.

Interpretation would emphasize the encampment period, but would be broadly based, placing the Morristown encampments within the wider contexts of the War for Independence and the history of related land use in the surrounding region. Additional emphasis would be placed on the changing meaning and evaluation of the Revolutionary period by later generations, through the termination of the Depression-era agencies in 1942, as they sought to commemorate and memorialize those events. This alternative would provide a greater opportunity to discuss the concept of sustainability.

This alternative would rely heavily upon successful partnerships, especially with the Washington Association, but also with other related organizations. In partnership with such organizations, the park would seek to inform visitors of the area’s related historical resources, perhaps through a regional orientation center. The Crossroads of the Revolution initiative would also be supported under this alternative. A park-town shuttle service might be provided the same as in Alternative B.

